

ONLINE PUBLISHING / BY TONYA ENGST

From the Web Press to the Web

Publishing on the Internet isn't like publishing on paper. Here's a guide to what HTML is and what publishing tools you can use to write Web documents.

IMAGINE BEING ABLE to publish documents that can potentially reach millions of people all over the world, with almost no printing or distribution costs. That's the appeal of the Internet's World Wide Web,

which lets online readers view styled documents with ease. (For more information on connecting to the Net, see "Making the Internet Connection," May '95, page 66.)

Individuals and organizations can use the Web to publish information ranging from personal home pages featuring family photos to business sites offering sales information, feedback forms, product samples, and more. But although creating documents for the Web *is* publishing, it's not the same as publishing with traditional page-layout tools such as Adobe PageMaker, QuarkXPress, or even Microsoft Word.

Creating Web pages is surprisingly easy once you get the hang of it, and since Web pages are built out of plain text, you don't even need any special authoring tools — although they can simplify the process immensely. The language of the Web is HTML, HyperText Markup Language, which you use to format your text for the Web. HTML-coded text is sent over the Internet to a Web browser, which interprets the HTML codes and displays your document on-screen. Since different Web browsers can interpret those codes in different ways, you can never have complete control of how your page will appear when viewed (see the "Eye of the Beholder" sidebar). This is why HTML isn't necessarily the answer if you want to move your existing design-heavy documents to the Web — in such cases, using a portable-document technology such as Adobe Acrobat might be a better bet.

HTML files are written in plain text that

consists entirely of letters, numbers, and other common characters, with no formatting (no 8-bit characters such as curly quotes and accented letters are allowed, although HTML can create some equivalents). Every Web page has a unique Internet address, called a URL (Uniform Resource Locator), based on what Internet site it calls home and where it resides in that site's file system.

To "publish" your home page, you put HTML files on a Web server, a computer having a continuous Internet connection and running Web-server software. Many Internet providers let users store home pages on their Web servers, but if you have a continuous Internet connection, you can easily run your own Web server on a Mac with software such as StarNine's WebSTAR (formerly MacHTTP).

How HTML Works

In many ways, HTML works like old word-processing programs: It uses tags to surround blocks of text you want to format a certain way. Most HTML tags come in pairs. The start tag appears between angle brackets and the end tag appears between angle brackets and is preceded by a slash. For example, to tag text as a main topic heading, you use an <h1> tag (think of h1 as standing for Heading #1), like this:

```
<h1>Welcome to Molly's Home Page!</h1>
```

A Web browser will display the heading in a font, style, and size specified by the

browser's display preferences, but you can be assured that <h1> text will be more prominent than <h2>, which will be more prominent than <h3>, and so on through <h6>, the lowest-priority heading in HTML. In addition to setting header text, HTML tags can set off block-quoted text; create numbered or bulleted lists; make definition lists, with hanging indents; and more.

Some HTML tags don't create elements such as headings but do influence the text's appearance. For example, the text below has been tagged to have a "strong" appearance, which many browsers interpret by displaying the text in bold:

```
<strong>My Mac needs more RAM!</strong>
```

If you have the willpower to memorize about ten of these tags, you are on your way to mastering HTML.

If you can cope with slightly more-complex tags, you can make hypertext links. A link appears on a Web page as underlined and/or highlighted text (again, depending on a user's preference), and Web users click on that text to follow the link. You can make a link to any page, as long as you know the page's URL. For example, <http://www.apple.com/> is the URL to Apple's home page. To link to Apple's home page, you might use this HTML:

```
<a href="http://www.apple.com">Apple home page</a>
```

This HTML uses an <a> tag (also known as an anchor tag) followed by the *href* attribute (*href* stands for *Hypertext REFerence*), an equals sign, and then the URL to Apple's home page in double quotes.



To find the URL of the page you want to link to, use a Web browser to go to the page, copy the URL to your Clipboard, and paste it into your HTML document.

HTML Tools

Although you can use any word processor to make a home page, there are dedicated HTML tools that make the process easier by allowing you to apply styles to HTML text just as you would apply italics to text in a word processor. Other tools hide HTML tags, replacing them with iconic equivalents. Still others don't provide a facility for *authoring* HTML but translate other file formats into HTML on the fly.

Starting from Scratch. Since the Internet is famous for copious amounts of shareware and freeware, it's no surprise that several noncommercial HTML packages are available on the Net. (All the following packages are shareware or freeware, unless otherwise noted.) Here are three of the best HTML authoring packages available:

Bernie Dodge's **HomeMaker**, a HyperCard stack, is by far the easiest package. The stack asks you questions and creates a home page. You can also use HomeMaker to get

started and then customize the page.

Rick Giles' **HTML Editor** displays HTML text in whatever style you've assigned to it but is likely of interest only to owners of 680x0-based Macs, because it runs too slowly in emulation on a Power Mac.

Robert Best's **HTML Web Weaver** works best for tagging imported text rather than creating new pages from scratch.

Converting Existing Documents. Users of page-layout programs can avail themselves of tools that map text styles and style sheets to HTML equivalents and export text as HTML. Frame Technology's **FrameMaker 5.0** includes an HTML export tool, and Adobe PageMaker users will get built-in HTML support when PageMaker 6.0 ships later this year with an HTML-converter Plug-in. For now, you might try Jeff Boulter's **Dave** or Mitch Cohen's **WebSucker**, both of which convert PageMaker 5 text into HTML.

QuarkXPress users who are serious about investing in HTML should check into the sophisticated **BeyondPress** (\$595), from Astrobyte (303-534-6344), which automates the conversion of QuarkXPress text blocks into HTML. Less pricey options include **Quark to HTML**, by Jeremy Hylton,

and **HTML Xport**, by Eric Knudstrup.

If you have word-processor documents to convert to HTML, try Chris Hector's **rtftohtml**, which works with word processors that save into RTF (Rich Text Format). Leonard Rosenthal's **HTML+** filter works with any Claris XTND-savvy word processor, such as WordPerfect or ClarisWorks. UserLand Software's clever **AutoWeb** uses automated scripts to make creating and updating a Web site nearly instantaneous.

Hard-Core Solutions. If you wake up one morning and find you've turned into a hard-core HTML author, consider using **Nisus Writer** (\$310), from Nisus Software (800-890-3030 or info@nisus-soft.com). By itself, Nisus Writer offers powerful search-and-replace and text-selection features that are quite useful in HTML authoring, and Sandra Silcot's **Nisus Writer HTML macros** tailor the program for Web authoring. Another option is the **BEdit** text editor (\$119), from Bare Bones Software (508-651-3561 or bbsw@netcom.com), in combination with Lindsay Davies' elegant **BEdit HTML Tools** extensions.

The **NaviPress** authoring tool (price not determined at press time), from NaviSoft (805-968-8804 or interest@navisoft.com), and the **WebWizard** add-on to Microsoft Word 6.0 (\$79), from NICE Technologies (408-476-7850 or nicetech@nicetech.com), will be available soon.

HoTMetal Pro (\$195), from SoftQuad (416-239-4801 or hotmetal@sq.com), is popular in the Windows market, but its disappointing first Mac version doesn't fit the typical interface and usage expectations of Mac users.

Extra Reading

To learn more about HTML authoring and related topics, check out the Apple Internet Web site and mailing lists at <http://abs.apple.com/apple-internet/>. An HTML version of this article, featuring links to referenced products and Web sites, is available at http://www.macuser.ziff.com/~macuser/mu_1095/pub1.html.

The noncommercial software mentioned here can be found in the `/text/html` directory of any Info-Mac mirror site or at <ftp://ftp.tidbits.com/pub/tidbits/tisk/html/>.

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Eye of the Beholder / every Web browser is different

THE VARIETY OF WEB BROWSERS means that unlike using the precision control of page-layout programs, designing HTML pages is an imprecise science.

We took the following small HTML document and viewed it with three Web browsers: Netscape Navigator (top), MacWeb (middle), and the text-based UNIX browser Lynx (bottom).

Even this simple file displayed quite differently in the three browsers:

```
<html><head><title>Molly's Page</title></head>
<body>
<h1>Welcome to Molly's Home Page!</h1>
My world view has changed now that I use the Web. I learned
<strong>lots</strong> of tips for HTML authoring from the
excellent <a href="http://abs.apple.com/apple-internet/">Apple
Internet Mailing Lists' web site.</a>
</body></html>
```

Netscape Navigator



MacWeb



Lynx

